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The Blue Economy and Ocean Resources

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The concept of the 'Blue Economy' has recently gained immense global traction as nations look toward the vast, unexplored oceans for sustainable economic growth. India, boasting a massive coastline of approximately 7,516 kilometers and an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) spanning over 2.02 million square kilometers, is uniquely positioned to harness these marine resources. Traditionally, the ocean has been primarily utilized for basic activities: fishing, shipping, and offshore oil extraction. However, modern oceanography is unlocking entirely new dimensions of economic wealth; these include marine biotechnology, deep-sea mining, and offshore renewable energy generation. The government's ambitious 'Deep Ocean Mission', approved with a budget of 4,077 crores for a 5-year period, aims to explore the hidden depths of the Indian Ocean. A key component of this mission is the development of a manned submersible vehicle—capable of carrying 3 human explorers to a staggering depth of 6,000 meters—to systematically study the deep-ocean biosphere and mine valuable poly-metallic nodules. These small, potato-like mineral clusters contain crucial elements: copper, nickel, cobalt, and manganese; all of which are absolutely essential for manufacturing lithium-ion batteries and advanced electronics. Furthermore, the fisheries sector plays a highly critical role in the coastal economy, providing direct livelihood to over 16 million fishermen. To boost export capacity, the administration has introduced the 'Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana' (PMMSY) with a targeted investment of 20,050 crores. This comprehensive scheme focuses on modernizing cold-storage infrastructure, promoting high-yield aquaculture, and preventing illegal/unreported fishing practices. Despite these lucrative opportunities, the marine ecosystem is currently facing severe existential threats from anthropogenic activities. Millions of tonnes of untreated industrial effluents and single-use plastic waste are dumped into the oceans every single year; this toxic pollution creates massive 'dead zones' where marine life simply cannot survive. Additionally, rising sea-surface temperatures—a direct consequence of global climate change—are causing widespread coral bleaching, permanently destroying the natural breeding grounds of thousands of fish species. To ensure that maritime development does not lead to ecological disaster, policymakers must strictly enforce sustainable coastal regulation zones (CRZ). Adopting a balanced approach is vital: we must scientifically harvest the ocean's resources while simultaneously protecting its fragile biodiversity. If managed efficiently, the blue economy can easily contribute an additional 4-5% to the national Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by the year 2030,

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thereby creating millions of new, high-paying jobs in the maritime sector. **2860**